

REMARKS

Applicant provisionally elected claims 1-21 and 23-34, these being claims readable upon Figures 1 and 2. The Applicant also traversed the restriction requirement on the basis that the Figure 3 embodiment discloses a second embodiment based on Figure 1/2, but modified by addition of a feature, namely an extra inner 'spacer 700' A.

Applicant submits that there is no basis for withdrawing claims 25-34 from further consideration as these claims relate to the Figure 1/2 embodiment and were listed by Applicant in the response to the restriction requirement as reading on the Figure 1-2 embodiment which Applicant elected for further prosecution. Furthermore, Applicant submits that claim 22 relates to an invention which is not a separate species from the claims which have been examined by the Examiner. Applicant believes he should be entitled to add a claim of this scope back into the application.

Regarding the objection under 37 CFR 1.75(c) relating to claims 4-11 and 13-34, the Examiner's attention is drawn to the Preliminary Amendment filed August 3, 2002, where the claims were amended to incorporate single claim dependences. In view of this, Applicant respectfully submits that Examination should have proceeded on the basis of the claims filed with the Preliminary Amendment and that the objection to these claims is improper. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that this objection should be withdrawn.

The Examiner will note, however, that Applicant has now further amended the claims to modify the claim dependencies, and to amend independent claim 1 in view of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(a).

Specifically, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the features of claims 3 and 20 as originally filed in International Patent Application No. PCT/GB/0314, from which the

present application is derived. Applicant therefore submits that there is clear basis for the amendment to claim 1.

Claim 1 has thus been amended to incorporate the substance of cancelled claim 20. It now recites a bearing unit comprising a plurality of bearing assemblies and wherein adjacent first bodies of the bearing assemblies are spaced by a respective first `spacer element.

The Examiner will note that the International Preliminary Examination Report published in respect of the above International patent application noted that the feature of claim 20 as published was not known or suggested by any of the documents cited in the International Search Report, and that the invention defined by claim 20 was novel and inventive over the prior art.

This prior art is the same as that referred to in the present Office Action, and Applicant submits that the invention defined by new claim 1 is novel and inventive over Palmgren, British '318. German '343 and Swiss '592, taken singularly or in combination.

Dependent claims 2-11 have been amended to specifically refer to a bearing unit in accordance with the revised language of new claim 1. Claims 13 and 20 have been cancelled in view of the amendment to old claim 1 to incorporate the features of these claims.

Claim 12 has been deleted and new claim 35 included. Claim 35 is based upon claim 12 as filed in the above International patent application, modified to include features corresponding to old claims 13 and 20, in a similar fashion to claim 1. Applicant respectfully submits that the invention defined by new claim 35, defining the first body to be at least partly flexible, is clear and that no amendment to the language of the claim is required. For the same reasons as discussed above, it is submitted that claim 35 is novel and invention over the cited prior art.

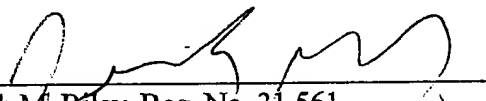
Further minor amendments have been made to various dependent claims to incorporate appropriate amendments in view of new claim 1, while certain claim dependencies have been amended, for clarity.

Finally, regarding the amendment to Figure 3, this amendment is to correct reference numeral 700A to read 700'A, in accordance with the above International application as originally filed and as described at page 11 of the description.

Applicant submits that the application is in order for acceptance and requests reconsideration in view of the above comments.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, Applicant invites him to contact the undersigned attorney at the office number below.

Respectfully submitted,


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